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ABSTRACT

Materials and approaches that college faculty can use to evaluate their instruction are described. This guide, prepared by a University of North Dakota (UND) faculty task force, describes new instruments, guidance for developing forms, ideas for interviewing and observing students, and suggestions for other approaches, including self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and the use of expert observers. Specific instruments and procedures for eliciting student evaluations of instruction consist of the following methods: written feedback provided by some form or instrument, feedback provided by conversation or observation, and feedback inferred from student performance in a course. It is suggested that Teaching Analysis by Students (TABS) is the best comprehensive instrument available for getting feedback from students. The UND faculty task force has assembled a set of forms, each specific to a particular teaching method (e.g., lecture, seminar/discussion, laboratory, and studio). Other forms cover teacher preparation, demonstration, and questioning; and the range of teaching materials. A 148-item catalog is also available to help faculty create their own forms. In addition, an overall strategy for eliciting student feedback is considered. A general procedure for gaining feedback from colleagues, peer evaluation forms/checklists, and self-evaluation instruments developed by higher education institutions are described. (SW)

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INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WAYS AND MEANS

Teaching Evaluation Resources
or
"When Student Ratings Aren't Enough"

Task Force on Faculty Evaluation
University of North Dakota

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TEACHING EVALUATION RESOURCES

OR

"WHEN STUDENT RATINGS AREN'T ENOUGH"

An officially-sanctioned student-ratings-of-instructor questionnaire is not the only way to evaluate instruction. We can assess our teaching -- for just a "check-up" or when serious improvement seems necessary -- in ways that match what we want to find out and the time we have to do it. Colleagues, oneself, "experts," and students (using different forms and procedures) can give us extremely useful information. In the package that follows we have described a number of approaches you might consider. We want to provide you with instruments and procedures designed specifically for helping college teachers.

Here's an example of how you might use these resources.

> James Torrone (a fictitious member of the UND faculty) wanted to get more information on his teaching. His student ratings were average, so he wanted to try another instrument to see if findings would be consistent. He also desired more specific and more detailed information than the student form provides. Finally, since he used the discussion method extensively, he hoped to find a way of focusing specifically on his success in using this approach.
>
> Through the Office of Instructional Development, Professor Torrone received a set of materials prepared by a faculty task force. These materials included new instruments, guidance for developing his own forms, ideas for interviewing and observing students, and suggestions for other approaches to evaluation such as self-evaluation, evaluation for peers, and use of expert observers. His look through these resources turned up some things he thought he would try out.
>
> He chose an instrument called TABS, which he procured at OID and which they scored for him. He also picked out a form designed specifically for evaluating discussion classes. Since he did not like some things about the form, he eliminated some questions and wrote his own. To round out this more extensive look at his teaching, he asked two colleagues in his department to review his course objectives and materials around certain questions that he had formulated.

The results of this assessment indicated many strengths in Torrone's teaching. Some areas in which he had scored low on the student rating form were better illuminated. Problems were also uncovered in sufficient detail to suggest specific changes. James felt a lot less ambiguous about the effectiveness of his course and his own teaching skills as a result of collecting additional information. In addition to being able to improve his teaching in specific ways, he now had more evidence of his ability as a teacher.

The characteristics of this approach to evaluation are: Self-initiated. The individual faculty member decides whether, when, and for what purpose these resources will be used. Not time-bound. These resources can be employed at any time and as frequently as desired. Flexible. What gets assessed, the amount of information collected, and its sophistication can vary depending upon the purpose and time available for the evaluation. Independent or assisted. Most of these resources can be used independently, but assistance is available through OID. For improvement and/or decision making. These resources have been designed to help faculty members with their instruction. But, they do produce information which you might want to submit to promotion, salary, and tenure decisions.

Many UND campus faculty members have used approaches like these. Now we bring them together with other instruments and procedures. We hope you will use this package as a resource booklet to consult whenever you find a need or interest in assessing your instruction. If we can assist you in any way, please let us know.

Task Force on Faculty Evaluation
Office of Instructional Development
Twamley Hall
777-3325

STUDENT EVALUATION[1]

Students provide one source of information about our courses and teaching skills. Since there are usually large numbers of them and since they experience more of our instruction than anyone except ourselves, they are a useful and important source.

The present student rating form used at UND provides feedback from students on our teaching. But, if you want more information or different information about your course and teaching performance, then you can use other approaches designed specifically for the improvement of instruction. These approaches include:

1. Other forms-with questions more appropriate to your teaching, more specific, and greater or fewer in number, more diagnostic, and scored more rapidly.

2. Your own forms-produced by yourself or assisted.

3. Interviews-formal or informal, individual or group, conducted by the instructor or students.

4. Informal student comments.

5. Observation (of students).

6. Student performance.

These approaches break roughly into three categories: written feedback provided by some form or instrument, feedback provided by conversation or observation, and feedback inferred from student performance in a course. In this section on student evaluation we describe and recommend specific instruments and procedures you might use. If the description interests you and you would like a copy, just call OID (777-3325), or stop by Twamley. Also we have collected a large number of approaches not described--forms and procedures of various length, format and focus. You are welcomed to review and use any of them.

As an addendum, we present a general strategy for getting feedback from students.

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[1]Other sections in this resource packet describe other sources of information about the effectiveness of instruction--peers, self, and "expert" observers, and ways of using these sources to evaluate and improve your teaching.

Forms and Instruments

1. Teaching Analysis by Students (TABS[2])

We consider TABS the best comprehensive instrument available for getting feedback from students. A large number of faculty members have used it and give it high marks. TABS provides feedback on 20 teaching skills and behaviors, e.g., organization, pacing, methods, and materials. The literature on teaching and learning suggests that these skills relate directly to effective instruction.

In addition to feedback from students, TABS provides an opportunity for an instructor to assess himself and to predict how students will assess him, and then compare these to students' ratings. The instrument collects descriptive data about students (e.g. class, GPA, student learning style, and overall rating) that can be helpful in interpreting results.

A description of the teaching skills and behaviors, TABS forms, and score sheets can be picked up at OID at any time. OID (with a little help from the Computer Center) will score the results and return them promptly.

2. Class Communication Questionnaire (CCQ[3])

CCQ has been developed as an alternative to highly-structured forms such as TABS. It asks a small number of rather broad questions, e.g., "What have you liked best about this course?" "What have you learned?" "What changes would you recommend?" And, it requires students to write out their reactions to the course and teacher. The CCQ has itself proven effective, but it represents a type of instrument which can solicit, by any similar set of questions, a lot of usable feedback.

CCQ is aimed at evaluating a particular class session. But there would be no reason that it could not be adapted to assess the course.

We can send you a short article describing the development and use of the CCQ and a sample form.

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[2]Developed by the Clinic to Improve University Teaching, University of Massachusetts.

[3]Developed by Learning and Evaluation Service, Michigan State University.

3. Methods: Lecture, Seminar/Discussion, Laboratory, Studio

You may be dissatisfied with the ability of the comprehensive forms to assess a course in which you use specific methods, or you may want to focus your evaluation specifically on certain of the methods you use. With this in mind, we have assembled a set of forms each specific to a particular method of instruction.[4]

The lecture form assesses instructor-student rapport, subject matter and presentation of material, and testing and grading. The laboratory, studio, and seminar instruments investigate structure and goals, subject matter and instruction, and expectations and evaluation.

You may copy and use the instruments as often and in whatever way you wish.

4. Teaching Skills: Preparation, Demonstration, and Questioning

The TABS form presented earlier seeks to assess basic teaching skills or behaviors. It asks one or two questions about each skill. The following forms[5] take three of these aspects of teaching--preparation, demonstration, and questioning--and probes in more detail. Although these are the only skills for which we could find forms, similar instruments could be developed for just about any important teaching skill or behavior.

5. Teaching Materials Evaluation

You may want to get feedback from students specifically on your teaching materials. We have identified an instrument that tries to cover the range of materials you might use with students, i.e., syllabus, bibliography, grading policies, handouts, and audio-visual materials. More specific forms could be developed to assess particular materials. We do have a validated instrument for evaluating slide-tape modules.

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[4]Developed for the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC).

[5]Developed by Learning and Evaluation Service, Michigan State University.

6. Catalog: Building Your Own Form

Designing your own form has distinct advantages. Because you choose the questions, you can make it as appropriate and specific as you like to your goals, content, and method. Also, because you choose the format, you can design the form of a proper length and in a style that fits you and your students.

Via catalog, you can create your own form from a list of 148 items. The items cover the range of aspects of instruction, e.g. course outcomes, interaction, difficulty, laboratory/recitation, textbook, exams. You may either use the catalog and produce your own forms or OID will type, duplicate, and score instruments of 20 questions or less that you will create. Only you will receive the results.

For a copy of the catalog, stop by (Twamley) or call (777-3325) You may request this service at any time during the term and as many times as you wish.

An added resource for the real "do-it-yourselfer," we have a module which provides the basic knowledge and skill you need to create your own form from scratch. Part I covers Fixed-Response Formats and Part 2 deals with Open-Response Formats.

Non-Form Procedures

Forms are not the only way to get feedback from students. They allow only one-way communication (from student to you) in evaluation. You have no opportunity on the spot to ask for more information. Also, forms tell you how students "talk" about you and your course. The behavior of students gives you another useful source of evaluation about your teaching.

Below we describe ways of getting more and different kinds of feedback from students. If you would like more information about any of them or would like to work with task force members to develop other procedures, just let us know.

1. Interviewing the Class

This method requires one classroom period with the total class.[6] You divide the class into small groups and ask students to do three things:

[6]Developed at the University of Washington.

a. identify components of the course that were positive, b. identify components that were weak or lacking, c. develop a proposal for improving the course. After ten minutes of discussion, a spokesperson for each group reports the findings of the group.

This approach provides a quick way to get feedback from students (quick to get, quick to summarize). You get an entire class perspective and the group reports and discussion allow for comparison and contrast of the different views students may have of the course. For students, the small group discussions allow an opportunity to think about their comments and to share them with other students before the instructor. Students also feel more involved in the evaluation you are doing.

2. Interviewing Individual Students

Sometimes you want feedback in more depth than can be gotten from a survey form or group interview. Interviewing individual students can provide this kind of information. It allows you an even greater chance to ask students to elaborate and explain their comments. Also, an interview which is a "conversation" between you and a student about the course or your teaching can stimulate his/her thinking and results in more useful feedback.

Interviews can have varying degrees of structure, depending on the specificity of what you want to find out.

You can interview students yourself or you can ask others to assist you. OID staff has many times interviewed students as part of our service to assist instructors in getting feedback about their teaching. We will also help you develop interview strategies and the skills necessary to get the kind of information you want. We have tape recordings of interviews which may give you an idea of the benefits and various approaches to interviewing students.

3. Asking Students to Observe

Students can observe your teaching, record what they see, and report it to you in ways that can be helpful to you. They can make their observations either systematic or informal.

If a particular aspect of the course or your teaching performance interests or concerns you, then ask students to systematically observe that aspect. For example, if you would like to know if you give enough examples in lectures and discussions, you could ask one or more students

to simply record each example you give and whether it helped to clarify the point you were trying to make. You'll need to "train" students to observe and record in the way most helpful to you; these are some things you'll need to consider:

1. Select the aspect(s) to be observed. Ask students to observe for only one or a small number of things at one time.

2. Define for observers the characteristics of the thing they are looking for, e.g., what is and is not an example.

3. Specify any other information you want, e.g. do you just want them to record whether the example was helpful or do you also want them to say why?

4. Give the procedure a "dry run." In our example, lecture for five minutes, then check to see if recording and comments are the kind you want.

5. Tell students how you want them to summarize their observations and give them to you. Do you want a written report, just their notes, or a meeting with them after the class?

If no particular aspect of your teaching concerns you, you may still be interested in student observations. In this case you can ask them to make, record, and report informal or anecdotal observations. Students observe your teaching everyday. Why not ask them to jot down and share with you those things that they think significant?

The key to this kind of observation is to tell students what kind of information you would find helpful--in terms of format and amount of detail--but do not limit them on what and when they might make and record observations. You might ask them to keep a section in the notebook they use for class notes. You could ask that they share them with you--either in writing or in person--each week, month, or after the term (and grading) is completed.

If students are going to give you their informal observations they should write them down; human memory is fallible. Their reports should contain an accurate, factual description of the thing observed and the situation and setting in which it occurred. The students' interpretations should be encouraged, but not as a substitute for objective descriptions.

Student Performance

What and how well students do on tests, papers, and projects can be another source of information used to judge course and teacher effectiveness. There are caveats to this approach, though, especially is used alone. But

if you believe that the strengths and weaknesses of the course and your teaching skill can or should be measured by student's achievement, then you may want to plan to look systematically at tests and other performance. We suggest the following approach:

First, determine as specificially as possible the things you want students to learn. Then develop teaching strategies aimed specifically at each objective and develop tests, papers or projects in which you tap student's understanding of each topic. After you check and grade assignments, then go back and analyze the performance of the class as a whole on each question. Ask your students: "How well did they do in learning the thing I wanted them to learn?"

If you give a fixed response type test, you can easily have it scored and analyzed in this way by the computer.

For each item you can then ask: "What about the course or my teaching could account for the good (or poor) performance. This is where other data may help, i.e. student ratings and observations, colleague assessments, and "expert" evaluations (including audio and videotapes of class sessions).

ADDENDUM
An Overall Strategy for Getting Feedback From Students

In addition to a knowledge of available student feedback forms and ways of developing your own forms, it is useful to have a strategy in mind for getting feedback from students. In the next couple of pages, we outline such a strategy.

1. Choose an Approach

   The approach you use will depend upon what you want to measure. Do you want to look at objectives, methods, materials, testing procedures? Are you interested in your classroom teaching behavior: lecturing skills, ability to facilitate discussion? You may want to assess all of these things or maybe one or two. It depends upon the aspect(s) of your teaching that concerns you the most or that which you want to improve.

   The approach you choose also depends upon pragmatic considerations. The number of students in your class(es) and the amount of time you have for evaluation and improvement activities will suggest some methods and dissuade you from others.

2. Design the Procedures

   Although the written questionnaire does not exhaust the ways to get feedback from students, it will be the most frequently used. Interviews, as well as observations and anecdotal records guided by questions, can also be thought of as an "instrument" for getting feedback from students.

   You have two choices when using instruments to evaluate teaching. You might: 1) select an existing instrument and use it as designed, or 2) create your own instrument, either from scratch or by modigying an existing instrument. Again, your purpose for evaluating and the focus of your assessment will determine which of these routes you will take.

   As a rule of thumb, if an existing instrument will do the job then use it. If the instrument will give you information on those aspects of your teaching which concern you and if it does not ask superfluous questions, then you have no need to modify it or create your own tool. An existing instrument has the advantage of some previous trial.

   If, on the other hand, no existing instrument asks the questions relevant to your teaching approach or your evaluation needs, then you must go on your own.

In the last section of these materials, a pool of items and some guidelines for preparing your own instruments will be provided.

3. Decide Whom to Question

Do you want to question all of your students or a random or special sample? The answer once again depends on the purpose of your evaluation and the pragmatic considerations.

Theoretically, the more students you survey, the more reliable your information. If you are looking for a typical response to each question, then large amounts of data will help build more solid trends. Also, questioning all students will insure that you get all the atypical, yet insightful reactions.

A large amount of data, though, can be time consuming and confusing to digest. You might consider a random sample of a class, especially if you ask for written comments.

You may have a desire to know how only certain students or categories of students see your teaching. You might want to know, for example, how students with lower grades react to the materials you use or your interaction with them. You also may want to exclude certain students from your evaluation, for example, students who did not participate in a number of class sessions.

4. Decide When and How Frequently to Evaluate

The kind of evaluation proposed by these materials differs from traditional evaluation of instruction by its continuous and flexible nature. Assessing your teaching should be done as often and at such times as information will be useful in monitoring and improving your course and teaching performance. Evaluating once at the end of a term can help in improving the course for the next term, but as a rule, getting more frequent and earlier feedback will be more helpful. Evaluating early in the term can provide information upon which changes can be made during the current term. Frequent evaluation provides a number of looks at the course and teaching performance and allows an evaluation of changes made during the term.

5. Implement the Method

Three issues merit some attention: anonymity, standardization, and conditions for evaluation.

Allowing students to give you feedback anonymously seems to be the safest bet. Most student evaluation is done this way. Students may feel freer of any kind of retribution during the course and at grade time. If you have specific reasons, though, for wanting students to identify themselves, then explain it to your class and proceed that way. If a climate of trust exists between you and your class, encouraging direct identified feedback may help create an openness that can facilitate the learning process as well as assessment.

Standardizing in evaluation means that each student completes the evaluation under similar, if not identical circumstances. If some students complete a form or respond to an interview one week and the rest of the class the next week, the results cannot be completely comparable. The events (class related and non-class related) may alter the reaction of the second group. Also, interviewing one student over a beer at the local pub may produce a different perspective than if the meeting took place in your office.

Conditions, an issue related to standardization, concern the time, frequency, place, and psychological environment for the evaluation. Time and frequency have been discussed above. Place, as the "pub" example implied, may affect student's responses. If you meet your class sometimes in a place more comfortable and pleasing than the regular classroom (e.g. your home) and administer an evaluation at one of these meetings, feedback may be less accurate.

6. Record Results

Questionnaires, interviews, informal comments, and observations must be recorded and somehow summarized for your use in judging and improving your teaching. The best rule of thumb is to summarize your data around the important questions you have about the course and teaching performance.

Integrate information from the various methods before you try to answer these questions. You may want to weight, in advance, the different kinds of data. In other words, student questionnaire results may be considered twice as important as your own observations.

Once you have posed your questions and have decided how to interpret and use your data, you should be in the position to use it to validate or suggest changes in your instruction.

7. Report and Discuss Results with Students

If students can be made to feel a part of your attempts to assess and improve your teaching, their cooperation and the quality of their feedback will be enhanced. Explaining your purpose and procedures for evaluation and revision of students at the beginning of the course will begin this involvement of students. In addition, after each separate assessment, a summary report of the results will further make students feel their feedback is welcomed and respected.

Inviting students to suggest ways to strengthen aspects which show up weak can result in novel ideas and an increased sense of participation and ownership in the course.

8. Take Action

It will be a waste of your time and a disappointment to students if data collected does not lead to some changes or improvements where indicated. Assessment should readily point out aspects of the course or teaching performance which are not effective and require no change. But, evaluation of the kind proposed here pays little dividend without a parallel commitment to improve the course based upon the information collected.

COLLEAGUE EVALUATION

Working with our fellow faculty members in the improvement of our instruction helps put the coll back in colleague. As cohorts who do the same job, they can be the source of tremendous insight and assistance. They have a very special perspective to offer, quite different from students, our own self-evaluation, or the observations of "experts."*

As instructors themselves, colleagues can observe our classroom work or our materials with an eye to the pressures and constraints teachers face at UND. Also, colleagues with whom we've taught for a number of years have a sense of the "history" of our development as teachers. Only they can take this into consideration as they observe and make recommendations. Finally colleagueship, and the improvement of instruction, are facilitated when we get and give ideas (and encouragement) to each other around our work as teachers.

A well-planned approach to using colleagues increases the chances that it will be useful and rewarding. When well conceived it is a valid and reliable way to evaluate our teaching. Most colleague evaluation is indirect, infrequent, and not directed at the concerns we have about our teaching. This, in part, explains the infrequent use of the valuable source of information at UND and elsewhere. Below we describe a general sequence of activities for planning and using colleagues in the improvement of our teaching. Also we have described four special procedures which you may want to try. Any of the materials described may be obtained at OID (Twamley, 777-3325). We also have developed a file with articles on colleague evaluation and descriptions of other procedures. We will assist you and your colleagues in any way we can as you use colleagues as a source of evaluation.

1. Getting Feedback From Colleagues
A General Procedure

1. Determine your purpose for involving a colleague(s) in assessing your teaching. Do you just want to check your own assessment or students' ratings? Or, will this be your only assessment? Do you want an "audit" or advice too from your colleague? Will this evaluation be only to help you improve or do you want also to include it in your personnel file? Answers to these questions give an important focus to the evaluation.

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*Other sections in this resource packet describe other sources of information about the effectiveness of instruction--peers, student, and "expert" observers, and ways of using these sources to evaluate and improve your teaching.

2. Decide who will assess your instruction. You may want to choose someone you trust! You also want a colleague who you think brings the knowledge, experience and perspective you desire. Someone who also teaches what you teach may be appropriate if you want to focus on the aspects unique to a particular course. A colleague who has tried and been successful with different approaches may be helpful. If you want the results to be used for future personnel decisions, you may want to ask an established member of the department to help you. He/she can observe and give hints as to what works best with the students in the department. You might want to ask more than one person. Whomever you choose, it should be someone with whom you have respect and can be open and honest.

3. Meet with the colleague(s) who will assess your instruction. In this meeting you can clarify a number of things: 1) What you want them to look at (i.e. a class session, syllabus, tests, other written materials, the overall design of the course), 2) the specific aspects you want observed (i.e. classroom pacing, personal gestures, or examples; difficulty and appropriateness of tests; content covered; etc.) and 3) any criteria you want the observer to use (e.g. "each point I make should be followed by two good examples."). Also, methods can be decided upon: Should the class session be taped or not? Do you want the observer introduced? Would it be helpful for the colleague to talk to some students? Finally, in this meeting, you can share your beliefs and biases about your teaching, as can the colleague helping you. This will help him/her better understand what you are doing and help you understand better the critique and suggestions you'll get.

4. Schedule the observations or reviews themselves. Decide how many class observations, tests, or sets of written materials to look at. The more the better, although visiting one class can result in significant observations and stimulus for discussion of your teaching with your colleague(s). Also, decide whether it will be a scheduled or a "surprise" visit(s). Either way, you should approach your class in a typical fashion (which usually means in the best way you can).

5. Meet with colleague(s) after the observations or reviews. Depending on your purposes, you may want just a factual and objective report from the person(s) assessing your instruction. You might want him/her to make suggestions for improvement and/or help you map a development strategy. If more than one visit or review is done, then the meeting after each should identify those things to look for in the next round. Finally if the assessment is being done also for your personnel files, a report should be written by the colleague(s) and commented on by you.

2. Peer Evaluation Form CASC-Instructional Assessment System

An excellent comprehensive guide to colleague evaluation, this form focuses on both in-classroom and out-of-class aspects of teaching. It asks questions about structure and goals, instructor-student rapport, subject matter, the instructor, and teaching strategies. It encourages the observer to write down examples of what he/she saw, as useful feedback and a place to start a discussion after the observation or review.

3. "Looking for Good Teaching . . ."

This specific procedure is built around checklists used by a colleague watching you teach. Separate checklists, developed by Barbara Helling at St. Olaf College, focus on "teaching through presentation," "teaching through involvement," and "teaching through questioning." Each of these are broken down into a number of specific practices which can be observed. You could ask a colleague to look for just those in which you are interested or all of them. The checklists ask the observer to check whether you exhibit practices related to effective teaching. Dr. Helling has based her lists on an exhaustive study of the literature on college teaching.

4. Colleague Description of Teachers

Developed at the University of California, Berkeley, this form asks a colleague to rate in twenty-seven different areas covering all aspects of teaching, in and out of the classroom. This approach defines very broadly the elements that affect excellence in teaching (from "keeps current with developments in his field" to "discusses teaching in general with colleagues"). It would be useful in conjunction with other approaches, when you're interested in your colleagues' assessment of your stature as a teacher.

5. Faculty Development Triads

Using the general procedure and an instrument like the CASC form, this approach suggests that three colleagues agree to assess each others'

teaching over a period of time. The advantages of this approach include getting more than one perspective, sharing the burden of assessing another's teaching, and boosting the commitment to assessing and improving teaching and the colleagueship in doing it. This approach is described further in an article by Tony Grasha and John Sweeney, in the OID formative evaluation file.

SELF-EVALUATION

Our teaching can be evaluated from many different angles. Students can rate it; colleagues can judge it; and "experts" can observe it. But the angle that offers the closest look is the one we have ourselves. No one knows or has access to more information about our teaching than us. And if we want to assess its effectiveness and improve it, systematic self-evaluation is an important tool.

This idea is not revolutionary. We can hardly avoid self-evaluation. But often we do not get as much out of it as we could, because of the ways we collect and use this information about ourselves. With a purpose clearly in mind, specific things on which to focus, and a strategy for gathering and using information, the key problems of personal bias and subjectivity can be limited. And when used in conjunction with information from students, colleagues, and experts, it can be a satisfying and power force toward professional development in teaching.*

In this section we have described five different approaches to self-evaluation. Any or all of the materials are available at OID (at no cost). Also we will be happy to discuss self-evaluation, or any other approach, with you and assist you in any way we can when you want to assess your teaching. Just stop by (Twamley) or call (777-3325).

San Jose State University Self-Appraisal Form

This form is extremely helpful in identifying the aspects of your teaching which need further work. It asks you to assess five major instructional areas: instructional strategies, tests and evaluation of learning, discussion techniques, instructor/student relationship, and course structure. Each area includes a series of specific questions which will help you decide whether you may need help in that area. In each of these areas we have written materials to assist you, or we can meet with you personally to suggest and assist with specific changes.

Every instructor, we would recommend, might use this one-page form periodically to self-assess his/her teaching. Consider it a "check-up."

Self-Assessment of Teaching Skills

This questionnaire is much like the San Jose State University form in that it contains a list of statements to which the instructor is to

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*Other sections in this resource packet describe other sources of information about the effectiveness of instruction--peers, colleague, and "expert" observers, and ways of using these sources to evaluate and improve your teaching.

respond. In this case, you are asked to indicate how much improvement you feel is necessary. The questions, however, are more specific to teaching skills and behaviors observed by the students in a classroom (e.g. explanation of course objectives, speaking skills, informing students of their progress). This form is a variation of TABS (Teaching Analysis by Students).[1] By using both it and TABS you can compare your own assessment with that of students.

Self-Evaluation Form
CASC Instructional Assessment System

The form is only three pages long yet each of its three sections approach self-evaluation in a unique way. Section one lists a series of open-ended questions concerning teaching behaviors and skills. The second section taps into the extent to which you think various types of learning should occur in the course. And, the third section requires the teacher to evaluate the course overall. The form is part of an excellent comprehensive evaluation system, including colleague and student ratings. You can use it by itself or with the other forms to check your own assessment.

Teaching Methods Inventory

This inventory lists 97 very specific statements describing approaches that you may use in your courses (e.g. I called on all class members to contribute to discussion almost equally.") You are requested to review each statement and decide how well it describes your approach. The result is a descriptive statement that will aid in the understanding of your teaching.

Force Field Diagnostic Technique

Rather than a structured questionnaire, this is a structured technique used often in decision making. In this procedure, you start by defining problem statements or areas to be evaluated (e.g. increasing students' attention in class). Then a list is made concerning the important forces that either inhibit or hinder progress toward solving the problem or approaching the goal. This technique identifies both strengths and weaknesses present in present approaches and potential effective and ineffective strategies. Decisions for change become articulated as a result. A handout describing the approach in more detail is available from OID.

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[1]Developed by the Clinic to Improve University Teaching, University of Massachusetts.

EXPERT EVALUATION

"Experts" can help you assess your teaching. In every department on campus there are master teachers who know about what makes for effective instruction. Also, at UND, OID has experience and the skill to assist you. You may want to know just how well you are doing, a "check-up." Or, you may have particular concerns (e.g., student ratings have declined, your tests seem too dull) and you want to have another opinion and even some assistance. These experts can provide you either. They are available. Use them.

Other kinds of observers also can be enlisted whenever you want to assess your teaching. These are our technological friends: audio and videotape. They are "expert" because they can record a complete account of a classroom session, without missing anything (within their limitations, of course). Tapes do not, though, interpret what they record or have recommendations for what to do different. If you can provide this yourself then these may be among the most effective ways to evaluate your teaching. Also, tapes can be a good place to start when discussing teaching with colleagues or with another kind of expert, at OID for example.

If you would like to have an expert assist you in assessing or improving your course, just call OID (3325). We will recommend someone in your department or school or work with you ourselves. We will observe classes and review syllabuses, written materials, and tests. We will also loan you audiotape and videotape equipment.

Classroom Visitation

This is the kind of procedure we would follow in observing your class as a way of evaluating your teaching.

1. Initial interview. The purpose of this interview is to: a) respond to questions about the evaluation, b) discuss the purposes and concerns you have in evaluating your teaching, c) suggest possible approaches, d) decide exactly what to look for and how to do it.

2. Observation. Usually this involves one or more classroom visits. Depending on the purposes of the assessment, we may also review syllabus, tests, and other written materials. And we might talk with students either in class or out.

3. Interview #2. All of our observations are given to the teacher to review. If you wish we will review the data with you and help identify strengths and weaknesses. Then you might select things which should be explored further or improved in some way. Improvement goals and strategies are then explored.

4. Follow-Up. If we work with you, often we will suggest another assessment and review at a later time to study effect of your efforts.

These procedures usually require about two-three hours of your time.

Audiotaping

The use of an observer in the classroom may either be too threatening, too involved, or inappropriate in some way for your purpose in assessing your teaching. As an alternative you can record your class yourself and later review the recording. We can provide you technical advice and things to look for in reviewing the tape. Once you have listened to it yourself if you would like another perspective, we would be happy to review it with you. As with observation, if you pursue an improvement strategy, you may want to do more taping to assess and review your progress.

Remember: If you are interested in taping your class for the purpose of self-evaluation, contact OID (3325) and we will provide the recorder and tape.

Videotaping

Videotaping of class sessions does supply information that audiotaping does not. However it presents special problems not found in any other evaluation strategy. It takes some getting use to by both instructors and students, so tapes of single class sessions are often too "staged" to be of much use. Also, the logistics are difficult at this time at VCU. Therefore we recommend this method only on those occasions when other methods of information gathering are inappropriate (i.e. self, peer, student, observer) or when video seems essential. You may want to see yourself teach; that's only possible through videotape. You and your class may be "loose" enough, or you may want to do it over a period of time (which allows everyone to get comfortable with it). We will be happy to advise your decision to use or not to use video and assist you if you do go ahead.